

**MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD**  
**For the Montana National Register of Historic Places Program and State Antiquities Database**

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
Montana Historical Society  
PO Box 201202, 1410 8<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Historic Address (if applicable):

City/Town: **Helena, MT**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Lewis & Clark Co.**

Historic Name: **American Building & Loan Association bldg.**

Original Owner(s): **American Building & Loan Association**

Current Ownership ☒ Private ☐ Public

Current Property Name: **Career Training Institute**

Owner(s): **Helena Housing Authority**

Owner Address:

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **10N** Range: **3W**

**NE ¼ SW ¼ SW ¼** of Section: **30**

Lot(s): **4**

Block(s): **417**

Addition: **Helena Townsite** Year of Addition: **1869**

USGS Quad Name: **Helena** Year: **1985**

Parcel ID: 05188830330010000

Historic Use: **Office**

Current Use: **Office**

Construction Date: **1955** ☐ Estimated ☒ Actual

☐ Original Location ☐ Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference [www.nris.mt.gov/topofinder2](http://www.nris.mt.gov/topofinder2)

☐ NAD 27 ☒ NAD 83 (preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **420543** Northing: **5160121**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date:

Historic District:

NRHP Eligible: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Date of this document: **November 15, 2009**

Form Prepared by: **Diana J. Painter, PhD**

Address: **3518 N. C Street, Spokane, WA 99205**

Daytime Phone: **(509) 290-5161**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: ☐ yes ☐ no not eligible under C  
Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D not evaluated under A, B, or D

Date: 11/16/2010

Evaluator: Kate Hampton

Comments:

# MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 2

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

**X** See Additional Information Page

Architectural Style: **Vernacular** If Other, specify:  
Property Type: **Commercial** Specific Property Type: **Office**

Architect: **Sigvald L. Berg** Architectural Firm/City/State: **Helena, MT**  
Builder/Contractor: **Underseeth & Logan** Company/City/State: **Helena, MT**  
Source of Information: **Newspaper**

The building at 347 N. Last Chance Blvd. is a two-story building with a basement. It has an irregular shape and a flat roof, with a canted corner entry. If the covered parking deck on the rear (east side) of the building is included in the building footprint, it is a square building. The building is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of N. Last Chance Gulch and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and encompasses a full half block in this location, extending to the property line on all sides. Its main entry is at the corner of these streets; a secondary public entry is located on the west façade, facing N. Last Chance Gulch. It is a reinforced concrete building clad in brick veneer, polished granite veneer, glazed terra cotta and tile, and metal, with a concrete foundation and a built-up roof. An announcement for the building opening noted that the granite was from South Dakota, the terra cotta from California, and the brick from Helena. It is a vernacular commercial building, constructed in 1955.

The main entry for the building is at the corner, looking out onto the intersection. It features an aluminum-frame door with full-height glass, two narrow sidelights on each side, and a transom above. It is sheltered by a metal-frame awning covered in canvas. Above the entry door is a plain panel finished in rough-finished stucco. Historically this panel held a sign for the business. Above this panel is a large window with three-over-three lights in an aluminum frame. This entire ensemble is enframed in a slightly projecting surround of glazed terra cotta. A large blade sign extends from the west side of the corner entry, with the business names.

**South façade.** Because of its corner location, the American Building and Loan Association building (its historic name) has two public faces. Both display various materials; the finishes on the building addition to the north repeat those of the original structure. The south face of the building, which is the original structure, takes up roughly half the block on this side, the covered parking deck making up the rest of this façade. The main portion of this face comprises five windows at the upper and lower levels, separated by pilasters that extend from the top of the building base, which is clad in polished granite, to the deep fascia at the roof.

The pilasters are clad in glazed terra cotta. The aluminum-frame windows have two-over-two-lights, the upper portion being small, fixed lights and the lower portion being casement sash. The spandrel panels are also glazed, and have a corrugated appearance. This window wall is framed on each end with brick veneer-clad walls. The fascia of the roof above, which encompasses the entire building, has a dark bronze finish. Its corrugated appearance has apparently been achieved by the placement of narrow ribs on sheet metal. This same material is used, along with tubular metal, for an enclosed rail on the parking deck.

## MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 3

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The rear half of the building, which is open but covered with an extension of the roof of the main building, is the parking deck, which is located at the second level of the building, as the site slopes steeply down toward Last Chance Gulch. Visible on the south façade are four small, two-light windows at the lower level with surrounds of small, glazed tiles. The windows sit on the granite-clad base of the building.

**West façade.** The other public façade on the building is the west facade, facing onto N. Last Chance Gulch. The south half of this façade is the original building, and the north half is the 1972 addition. The portion that is original repeats the fenestration and finishes of the south façade, with the exception that a granite panel with terra cotta frame is located at the ground level within the brick bay that originally terminated the building. The granite base of the building in this location extends to the bottom of the window sills.

The newer portion of the building, on the north side, displays six windows at the upper level, with a brick-clad pilaster at each end and in the center. The lower portion of the addition is sheathed in granite from its base to the sills of the second story windows. At the lower level is a secondary entrance, made up of an aluminum door with full-height glass flanked by two plate-glass windows with aluminum frames. This entrance is recessed from the face of the building. To the left of this entrance is a long, narrow, horizontally-oriented display window.

**East façade.** On the east side of the building is an open, covered car deck. This deck is entered on the north side of the building lot and is exited at the southeast corner of the lot. The roof over the deck, which has the same ribbed metal fascia as the remainder of the building, is supported by two large and one small unclad I beam. An enclosed rail clad in the same metal as the roof, topped with horizontal tubular metal rail, encloses the south side of the deck. The north side has a short retaining wall separating the deck from the neighboring property.

The east façade of the building in this location has a slight L-shape. It is entirely clad in brick. A secondary entry and two windows of the same design as the rest of the building are located on the north side of this façade. The door is a flush metal door with a single light in the upper portion. Two entry doors of the same design as the northerly door and two additional windows are located on the south portion of this façade.

The north façade of the building is not visible, as it abuts the neighboring building.

**Changes over time.** The major change to the property is the construction of an addition to the north, which doubled the square footage of the building, and the construction of a parking deck on the east side of the building in the 1970s. At that time the original deep glazed terra cotta fascia was removed and a dark-colored, ribbed metal fascia added around the entire building, presumably to visually tie together the various parts. As a result, the top of the building has a very heavy appearance, which was not the case historically.

## MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 4

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Additional changes to the building are as follows. Originally the granite panel near the center of the west façade today contained a door to the second level. Today this panel displays a sign for the building, which looks out of place in the center of the façade at the lower level. The sign for the business that was originally above the main entry has been removed. Today this is a stucco-clad panel, which is likely not the original building material.

The windows on the building have been replaced, but the new windows have the same configuration and aluminum frames as the original windows. The new windows have smaller casement sash than the original, but this is not readily apparent.

The quality of design apparent in the original building, which was slightly reminiscent of a pre-war structure with its symmetrical treatment and vertical emphasis, is not repeated in the 1970s addition. The 1970s addition has been further altered by the presence of an interior partition which now blocks one of the plate glass windows at the entry.

The quality of materials and craftsmanship of the original building is decidedly not evident in the design of the parking deck, which has an unfinished appearance. The rear façade of the building is strictly utilitarian and contains building equipment in addition to exits to the parking area.

## MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 5

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

### HISTORY OF PROPERTY

☒ See Additional Information Page

**Owners and tenants.** Prior to construction of the building at 347 N. Main Street a gas station was located on the site. It was a brick building with a wood canopy, oriented toward N. Main Street, and constructed in 1938. The new building, constructed in 1955, was built for the American Building & Loan Association. The Association, founded in 1922, had previously been located at 42 W. Sixth Avenue. They continued to occupy the building until 1980, when the occupant was the American Federal Savings & Loan Association (this was likely just a business name change). They continually also rented out offices to other businesses as well, including (over time) an optometrist, lawyers, bankers, congressmen, and the Montana Bankers Association. American Federal Savings & Loan Association occupied the building until the late 1990s. In 1997 the building housed the Career Training Institute and the Helena Housing Authority, both of which continue to occupy the building today.

**Development of 347 N. Last Chance Gulch.** The building was designed by Helena architect Sigvald L. Berg. Underseth & Logan, Inc., were the contractors. The building permit was issued on June 7, 1955 for the 2,250 square foot building; with an estimated construction cost of \$90,000 (*City of Helena building permits records*).

The addition to the building, which doubled its size to 4,785 square feet, was constructed in 1973 by contractor Ingrahm-Clevinger.

### INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

☐ See Additional Information Page

"American Building and Loan Now Located in Smart New Building," *The Independent Record*, April 13, 1956:3.

"Building, Loan To Erect New Structure," *The Independent Record*, June 2, 1955:1.

City of Helena building permits records. On file, Helena Building Department, October 2009.

Harris, Cyril M., *American Architecture, An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.

"Helena as She Was, Images of Montana's Capital City," [http://www.lifelikecharm.com/buildings\\_of\\_note.htm](http://www.lifelikecharm.com/buildings_of_note.htm), downloaded November 11, 2009.

R. L. Polk & Co., *Helena City Directory*. Salt Lake City: R.L. Polk & Co., Publishers, 1947, 1950, 1953, 1954, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967 – 1991.

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, 1930; 1930 updated to 1951; 1930 updated to 1958.

US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997 (1990).

## MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 6

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

### HISTORY OF PROPERTY

The architects for the addition were Crossman, Whitney & Griffin. The new construction required the demolition of the previous building at the site, an ice cream factory and creamery, which had been there since before 1930. The estimated construction cost was \$176,983. The new parking deck was permitted in 1973. Subsequent interior renovations occurred in 1980 and 1997. In the latter renovation a portion of the picture window on the newer addition was blocked with the construction of an interior demising wall.

**The new building.** An article in the April 13, 1956 edition of *The Independent Review* described the new building in detail.

"American Building and Loan association has moved into its new \$160,000 fireproof, reinforced concrete, decorative [not legible] office building on Last Chance Gulch at Seventh.

The 45 by 500 [sic] feet two-story building faces to the south on the gulch and houses the offices and records of the American Building and Loan association on the ground floor with rental space on the second floor taken over by a legal firm, an insurance man and an optometrist.

The 26-foot high building is surrounded on the west and south by a black concrete walk and has an attractive combination of red granite from South Dakota, terra cotta from California and brick from Helena on the exterior.

The only entrance to the American Building and Loan association offices is through the aluminum framed doors which are set at an angle for ease of entrance from the Seventh avenue of Last Chance Gulch sides. The second floor with its slip-resistant yellow terrazzo stairway on the Last Chance Gulch entrance also has a rear stairway leading to the building parking lot at the rear on Jackson and Seventh.

Construction of the new building was started in June, 1955, after the directors had determined that a new headquarters was required for adequate vault space and a desire for modern offices designed for the association use.

The interior, like the exterior, reveals no shortcuts were taken in cost to provide an attractive and useful headquarters.

A visitor to the new offices first goes through a set of street doors into a small entry way between the exterior doors and the interior doors, which also are of aluminum frame and jam construction.

After stepping through the second set of double doors, the visitor finds himself in the foyer with its pink terrazzo floor with green border and features. A natural finish birch counter divides the foyer from the workroom.

The foyer has chairs for patrons who are waiting and a small desk at one side for writing. It is decorated with two Roman brick planters containing large-leafed plants . . .

The directors' room is carpeted wall-to-wall in a brown, yellow and beige mixture. The walls are of coca and beige with colorful drapes matching the decorative theme of the room.

The ceilings woodwork and windows are the same throughout the building. The windows are aluminum-framed of the casement type. The ceilings are made up of striated fiber glass with acoustic properties. The woodwork is of natural finish birch. Lighting is recessed in the ceiling.

To the left of the foyer is the office of the secretary-treasurer. This room, 14 by 23 feet, is carpeted in green. The walls of copper and pale turquoise and appropriate draperies [sic] over the windows facing Last Chance Gulch.

Adjacent to the directors' room is the office of the president. This room, too, is carpeted and has walls in light tones.

## MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 7

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

### HISTORY OF PROPERTY

The large workroom has a vinyl tile floor in neutral color and sauterne and sandalwood wall colorings. It provides desks and work space for the two assistant secretaries, Clara Rogers and Jacquie Tobin. The furniture is of modern and utilitarian type yet attractive and matches in all the rooms.

At the rear of the 15 by 23 foot workroom is the large vault with a fireproof doorway and steel shelving to protect association records which date back to its founding in August, 1922. It is nine by 20 feet, large enough to take care of the association needs for many years.

Another smaller room off of the work area is used for supplies and storage. Other areas adjacent are used for rest rooms, a janitor's closet, cloak rooms and a stairway to the basement.

The basement is finished in light colors and contains the full hot water heating plant for the first and second floors plus additional vault space. The west side is only partially excavated with no future plans for its use.

The second floor of the building was decorated to suit the taste of the tenants . . . the building was erected by Underseth and Logan, general contractors. The architect was Sigvald L. Berg."



STRIKING IN APPEARANCE, this new two-story brick and marble-faced concrete structure is the new \$100,000 home of the American Building and Loan association of Helena. The loan association will occupy the ground floor. The second floor of the structure at Seventh and Last Chance Gulch already is leased for private offices.

Photograph from *The Independent Record*, January 1, 1956

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 8

Property Name: 347 N. Last Chance Gulch

Site Number: 24 LC 2196



Photo showing American Building and Loan in 1964

Courtesy "Helena as She Was, Images of Montana's Capital City"

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 9

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

**Evaluated Under Criterion C only – more research required for A, B, of D eligibility**

NRHP Eligibility: ☐ Yes ☒ No ☒ Individually ☐ Contributing to Historic District ☐ Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Area of Significance: **Commercial development** Period of Significance: **1955**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

☐ See Additional Information Page

The building as originally constructed was a post-war example of the work of Helena architect Sigvald L. Berg. The building displayed design qualities that associate it with pre-war work, including an overall symmetry and some details reminiscent of the Art Deco (Berg's 1934 Art Deco Rio Theater is close by), including the vertical pilasters and terra cotta detailing. Nonetheless, the building also uses modern materials such as aluminum, and displays Berg's characteristic mix of materials, which he used in a modern manner in place of traditional architectural detailing. The building as originally designed fit well in its urban setting, presenting clean, modern lines, but also maintaining compatibility with the surrounding buildings, which represent several architectural styles and periods of construction.

INTEGRITY

☒ See Additional Information Page

**The following is an analysis of 347 N. Last Chance Gulch with respect to the seven aspects of integrity.**

- Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

*The building is in its original location.*

- Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

*The design of the building has been severely compromised with the construction of an addition to the north that doubled its square footage, and the construction of a structured parking deck that doubled the square footage of the entire building again on the east side. The removal of the original tall terra cotta fascia that terminated the building and its replacement with a dark metal fascia that wraps around all three parts of the building has altered and undermined its appearance. Further, the design and material quality of the additions are not commensurate with the original building.*

## MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 10

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**

### INTEGRITY

- Setting is the physical environment of a historic property.

*The setting of the building is intact.*

- Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

*The addition of a ribbed metal fascia at the roofline and on the south façade in the form of an enclosed rail represents a change in materials. The new materials of the building addition, for the most part, repeated the materials of the original building, with the exception of the glazed terra cotta trim.*

- Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

*The workmanship of the building was altered with the replacement of terra cotta with ribbed sheet metal.*

- Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

*The building no longer retains its original feeling.*

- Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

*The building no longer retains its original association. It no longer conveys the reason for its significance.*

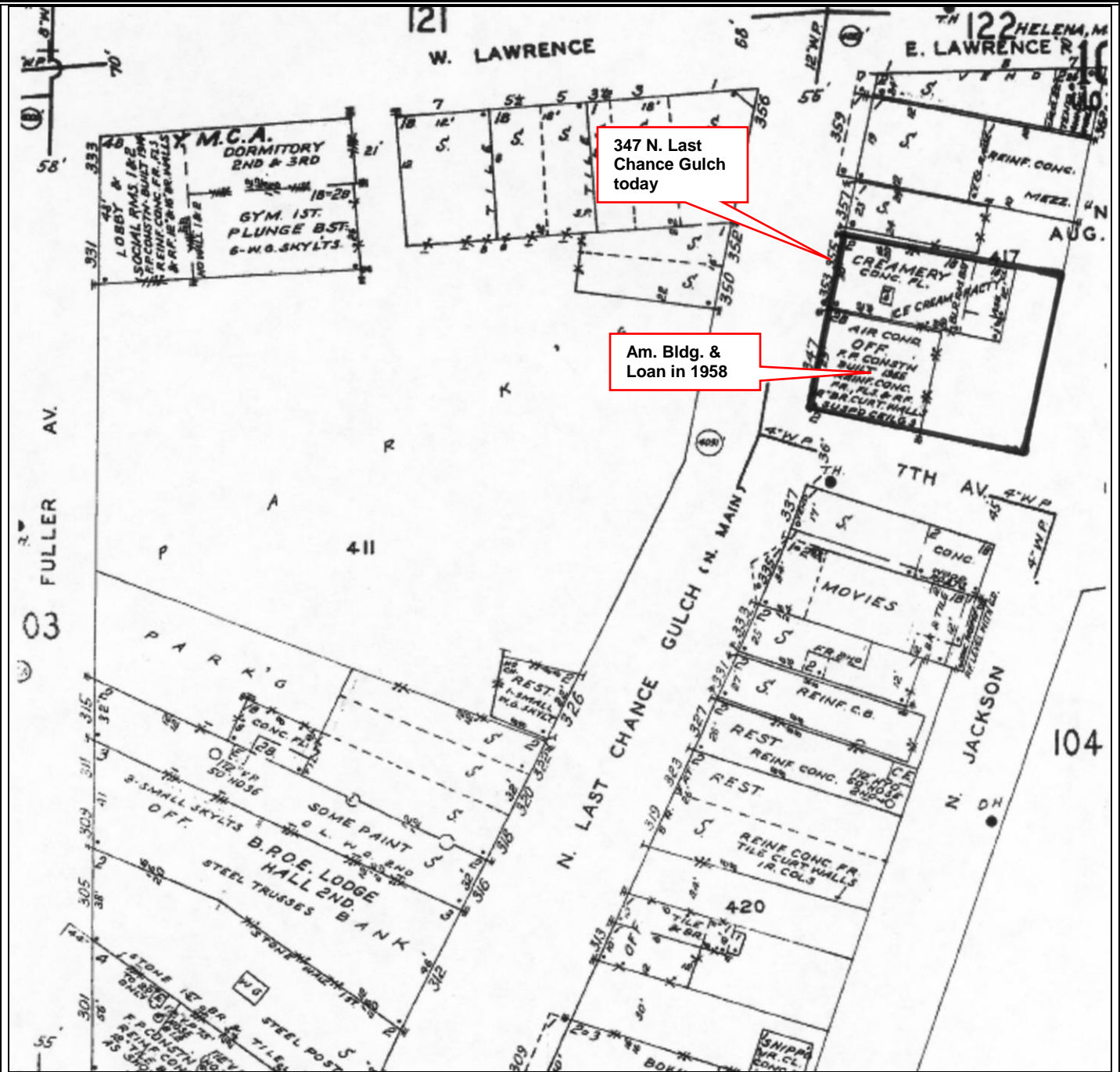
**Summary.** The building retains integrity of location and setting. It does not retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling or association. The building is therefore not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The resource was not evaluated for its eligibility under A, B, or D.

# MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD

PAGE 11

Property Name: 347 N. Last Chance Gulch

Site Number: 24 LC 2196



**MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**



Description: **West and south facades, November 3, 2009; viewed from southwest**



Description: **South façade and corner entry, November 3, 2009; viewed from southwest**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD  
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **347 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**



Description: **West façade, November 3, 2009; viewed from west**



Description: **Secondary entry, west façade, November 3, 2009; viewed from northwest**

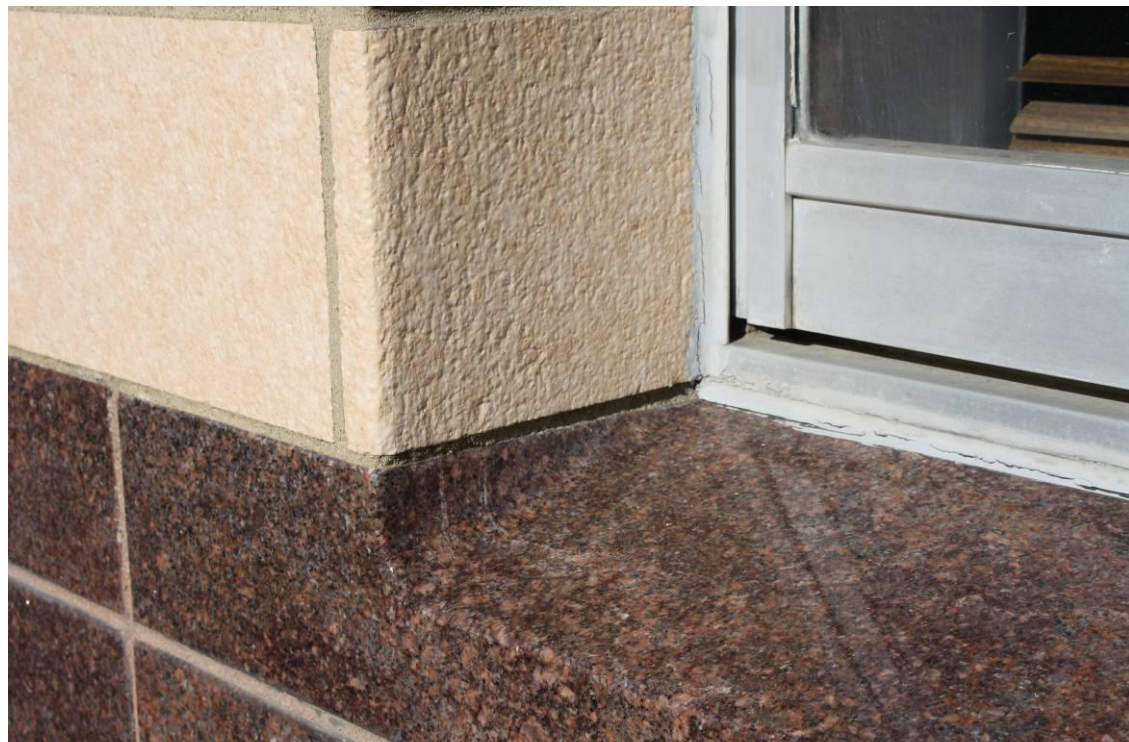
**MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Property Name: **357 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**



Description: **South and east facades (parking deck), November 3, 2009; viewed from southeast**

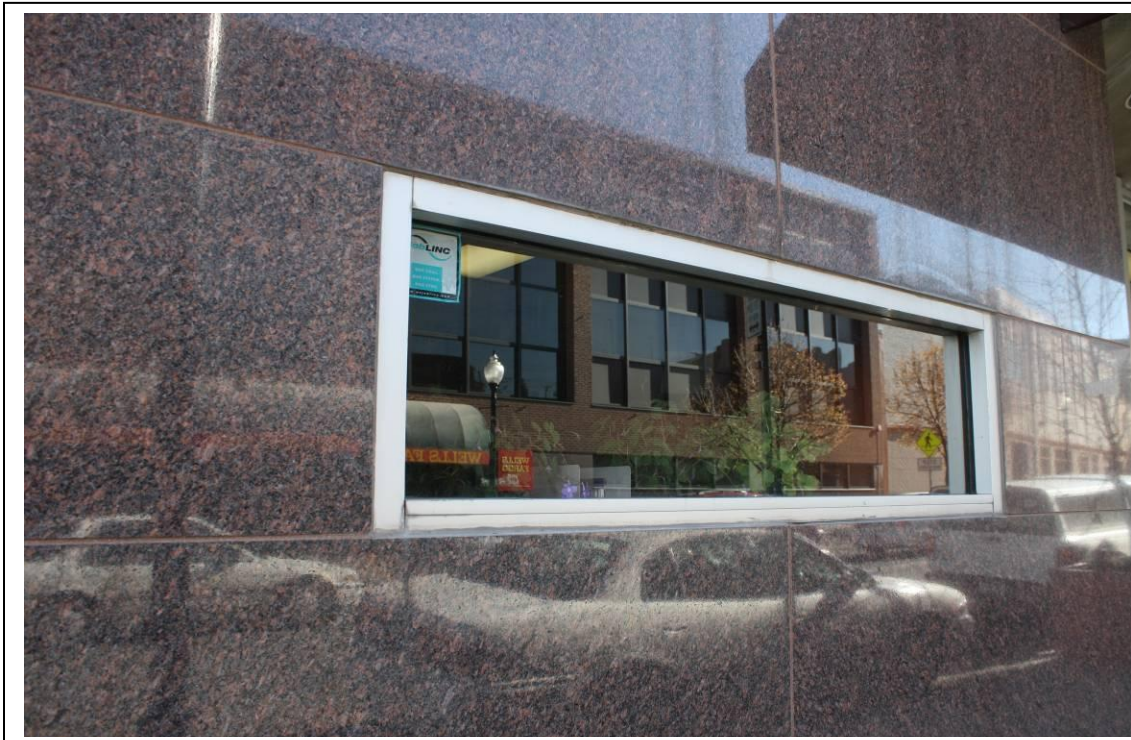


Description: **Detail, window sill on north façade with glazed terra cotta, November 3, 2009**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD  
PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **357 N. Last Chance Gulch**

Site Number: **24 LC 2196**



Description: **Detail, display window on north side of west façade, November 3, 2009**

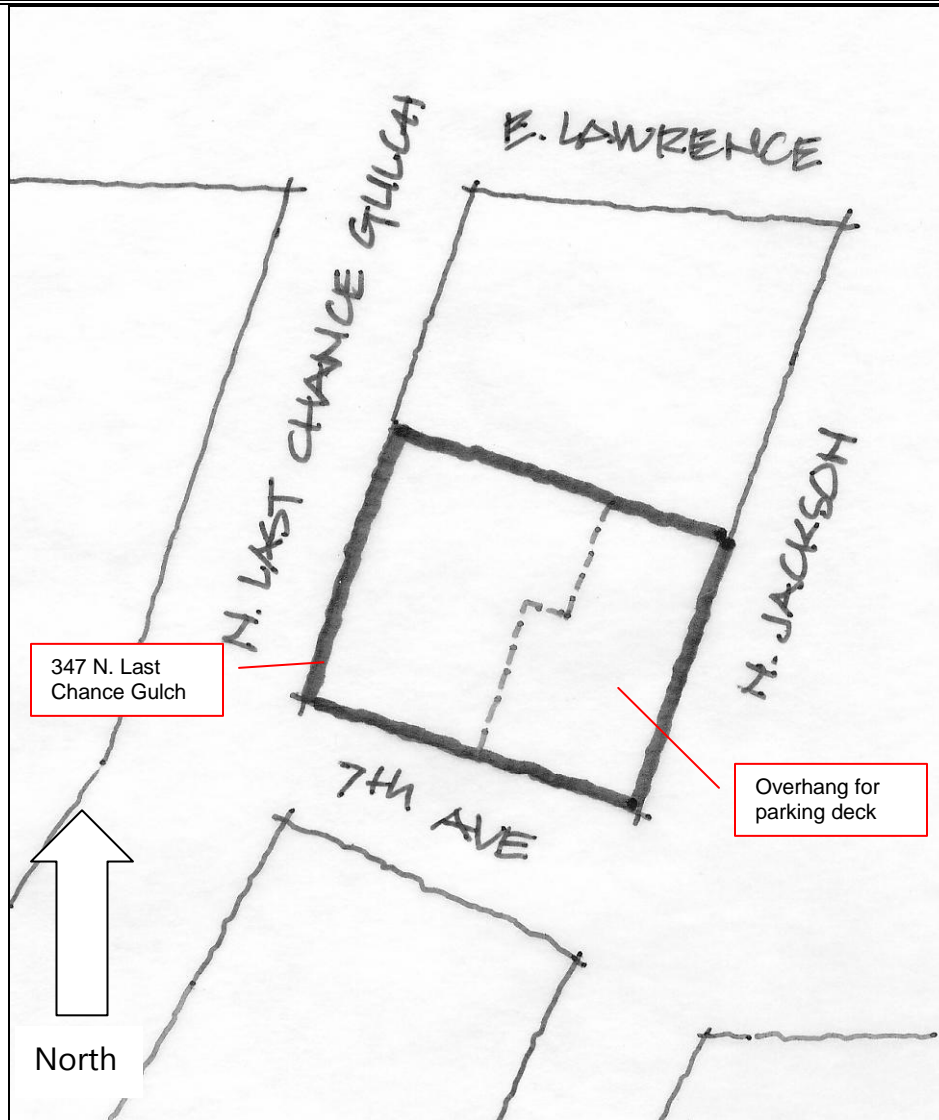


Description: **Detail at corner entry, November 3, 2009**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD  
SITE MAP

Property Name: 347 N. Last Chance Gulch

Site Number: 24 LC 2196



MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD  
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Property Name: 347 N. Last Chance Gulch

Site Number: 24 LC 2196

